



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
NEWS RELEASE

Department of Toxic Substances Control

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**Department Assists in Removal of
Drug Lab Contaminants**

Riverside – The California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) has completed a hazardous waste removal at an illegal drug lab in Riverside County. Riverside law enforcement officials believe the lab was a major source of methamphetamine in California.

“At an estimated cost of \$284,000, this is the largest removal we have conducted, since our drug lab emergency cleanup program was established in 1995,” said DTSC Director Ed Lowry.

The lab, located in the remote hills between Mead Valley and Good Hope in Riverside County, required the removal of several hundred tons of debris and the excavation and removal of approximately 1,000 tons of contaminated soils.

“While it is important to arrest and prosecute those who establish and operate these labs, it is equally important to clean up these locations as quickly as possible to limit further danger to public health and the environment,” Lowry added.

DTSC responded to a call from local law enforcement and health officials on March 6, 2003. DTSC’s emergency contractors spent more than a week:

- 1) Carrying out extensive soil excavations to remove large amounts of lab-related hazardous materials buried throughout the area,
- 2) Removing all lab equipment and hazardous materials found at the site that were used to make methamphetamine, and
- 3) Eliminating all acute exposure threats posed by the lab

The DTSC responds to requests from federal, state, and local law enforcement by funding the work of environmental contractors who specialize in cleaning up clandestine drug labs. DTSC’s clandestine lab program ensures quick and safe removal of chemicals that pose an “acute” health risk. Staff from DTSC’s clandestine lab program is dispatched to clean up illegal labs an average of six times a day, 365 days a year.

That is an average of once every four hours, weekends and holidays included. This program handled 2,208 illegal lab emergency response actions during the past fiscal year which ended June 30, 2002.

"Illegal drug labs are a growing problem", said Lowry.

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The Department of Toxic Substances Control's mission is to restore, protect, and enhance the environment and ensure public health, environmental quality and economic vitality by regulating hazardous waste, conducting and overseeing cleanups, and developing and promoting pollution prevention.

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"The energy challenge facing California is real. Every Californian needs to take immediate action to reduce energy consumption. For a list of simple ways you can reduce demand and cut your energy costs, see our Web-site at www.dtsc.ca.gov."